

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00
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-----082058 151948Z /64
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE NIACT IMMEDIATE 3593
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT LEONE RESIGNS

LONDON PLEASE PASS AMBASSADOR GARDNER

1. PRESIDENT GIOVANNI LEONE RESIGNED THIS
EVENING, JUNE 15. AS PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, AMINTORE FANFANI
WILL AUTOMATICALLY SUCCEED LEONE AS ACTING PRESIDENT UNTIL A
NEW PRESIDENT IS CHOSEN BY A JOINT SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENT.

2. LEONE EXPLAINED HIS DECISION TO RESIGN IN A "STATEMENT
TO THE PEOPLE" BROADCAST ON ITALIAN TV AT 2000H LOCAL.
IN HIS STATEMENT, LEONE SAID THAT BECAUSE OF THE ATTACKS ON HIM
AND MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY HE HAD CONSIDERED RESIGNING SOME TIME
AGO. HE HAD NOT DONE SO BECAUSE, SINCE HIS RESIGNATION COULD HAVE
IMPORTANT INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES, HE HAD
DECIDED TO PUT THE INTERESTS OF THE STATE BEFORE THOSE OF
HIS PERSON OR FAMILY. HE EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD DECIDED TO
RESIGN AT THIS TIME BECAUSE THE ATTACKS ON HIM HAVE REACHED THE
POINT THAT THE CONTINUED EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF THE INSTITUTION
OF THE PRESIDENCY IS ENDANGERED. HE CONCLUDED WITH A
SOLEMN ASSURANCE TO THE PEOPLE THAT THEY HAD IN HIM AN HONEST

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PRESIDENT WHOSE ACTIONS HAD ALWAYS BEEN LEGALLY AND MORALLY
CORRECT.

3. IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR WHAT PRECIPITATED LEONE'S ACTION
TODAY. NEITHER THE PRESS ATTACKS NOR THEIR SUBSTANCE ARE
PARTICULARLY NEW. THERE IS, NATURALLY, CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION
ON THIS SUBJECT. SOME ASSERT THAT LEONE AND THE DC HAD PLANNED

HIS RESIGNATION TOWARD THE END OF JUNE OR IN EARLY JULY IN ORDER TO AVOID THE "WHITE SEMESTER", THAT THE RESIGNATION WOULD BE JUSTIFIED ON THAT BASIS, AND THAT THE OTHER PARTIES HEAD OF THIS PLAN AND FORCED THE PACE. A VARIATION ON THIS THEME IS THAT LEONE PREPARED YESTERDAY, AND CIRCULATED THIS MORNING TO ALL PARTIES, A DRAFT RESIGNATION MESSAGE BASED PRIMARILY ON THE DESIRABILITY OF AVOIDING THE STERILITY OF THE WHITE SEMESTER. THE PARTIES (OTHER THAN THE DC) ALL REACTED NEGATIVELY AND DECIDED TO TRY FOR PARTISAN POLITICAL REASONS, TO FORCE LEONE TO RESIGN NOW BECAUSE OF THE ACCUSATIONS OF IMPROPER CONDUCT. ANOTHER RUMORED EXPLANATION IS THAT NEW AND VERY DAMAGING INFORMATION AGAINST LEONE IS ABOUT TO BECOME PUBLIC IN THE COURSE OF THE LOCKHEED TRIAL AND THAT KNOWLEDGE OF THIS FACT STIMULATED PCI AND OTHER PARTY ATTACKS AND, IN THE END,, PERSUADED LEONE TO RESIGN.

4. THE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES TO SUCCEED LEONE APPEAR TO BE FANFANI, ZACCAGNINI, AND ANDREOTTI IN THE DC, LA MALFA OF THE PRI, AND DE MARTINO AND GIOLITTI OF THE PSI. AT THIS STAGE, WHICH IS VERY EARLY, IT WOULD APPEAR MOST LIKELY THAT THE NEXT PRESIDENT WILL BE ONE OF THE DC CANDIDATES MENTIONED ABOVE AND THAT THE LEAST LIKELY APPEAR TO BE THE PSI ONES. HOWEVER, IT IS FAR TOO SOON TO HAZARD ANY PREDICTIONS.

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TAGS: PINT, IT, (LEONE, GIOVANNI)
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